

Yoga makes of its true disciples good, healthy and happy men, even as Shelley claims goodness, health and happiness for the true poet. It is not mere submersion in the unconscious. Of all these things it is profoundly true that their mysticism is not mystery, but mystery unveiled.

The teaching of this old philosopher to whom we attribute the Tao Teh King is only a philosophy in the sense that the fragments of Early Greek thinkers are philosophies,—a residue of much experience and more debate. But it is also a penetrating psychology, with human character in a cosmic setting, a precious and stimulating ethic, and a moving interpretation of the interrelation of humanity and the world of infinity. No such body of teaching so true, so comprehensive, has ever been propounded in so few words, except the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Tao is one of those clusters of remarkably terse and impressive sayings which seem to come from something deeper than an individuality; they embody the essence of the wisdom of a race or an age. They have only been heard among the older peoples, and Asia has been the birthplace of most of them. They are not encumbered with the restless comment of Western self-consciousness; all that is in the East is winnowed in endless talk; what we have is the harvest of golden grain, which never loses its lustre, its appeal to the unappeasable longings of the human heart.

What then is Tao?

It is generally spoken of as the Path, but it is even more truly the Passing. The old book deals with it in the way of all mystics. It is something which cannot be uttered, only suggested by words. And thus it is of the nature of all great poetry, where the meaning is partly revealed, partly elusive.

It is unfathomable, impalpable, and the source of all truth. Its vagueness conceals form, and it was before all creation. Life depends on it, and it nourishes everything in the world. It is the undefinable which is behind personality, that which draws men and delights them in one another.

It is the great invisible from which all visible things arise, the great silence from which all sound is born. It is the light against which all the shadows we call life are set in play. It is behind all change, all unfolding of what is perfect. It is behind all might, and yet it is the overcoming of might without striving.

The much talked of non-action of Tao is a relative thing, like every summarization of human conduct. It is a popular attitude of Western mentality facing Eastern thought to regard the final processes of that thought as leading to the void in which both thought and passion are consumed, instead of to purposive activity. Certain developments of metaphysical thought of both East and West do fade away in abstraction, but if there is any being in the world who has his feet firmly planted on the earth it is the Chinaman.